



## A Fruitful Renovation

Designer Andre Sabbagh transforms a typical suburban basement into a luxurious wine cellar and home theater

By Sharon Jaffe Dan  
Photography by Bob Narod

It all started when a light fixture over a Rockville couple's pool table broke. They asked their friend, interior designer Andre Sabbagh, for advice on whether to fix it or buy a new one. This launched a discussion about what they thought the lower level of their home should ultimate-

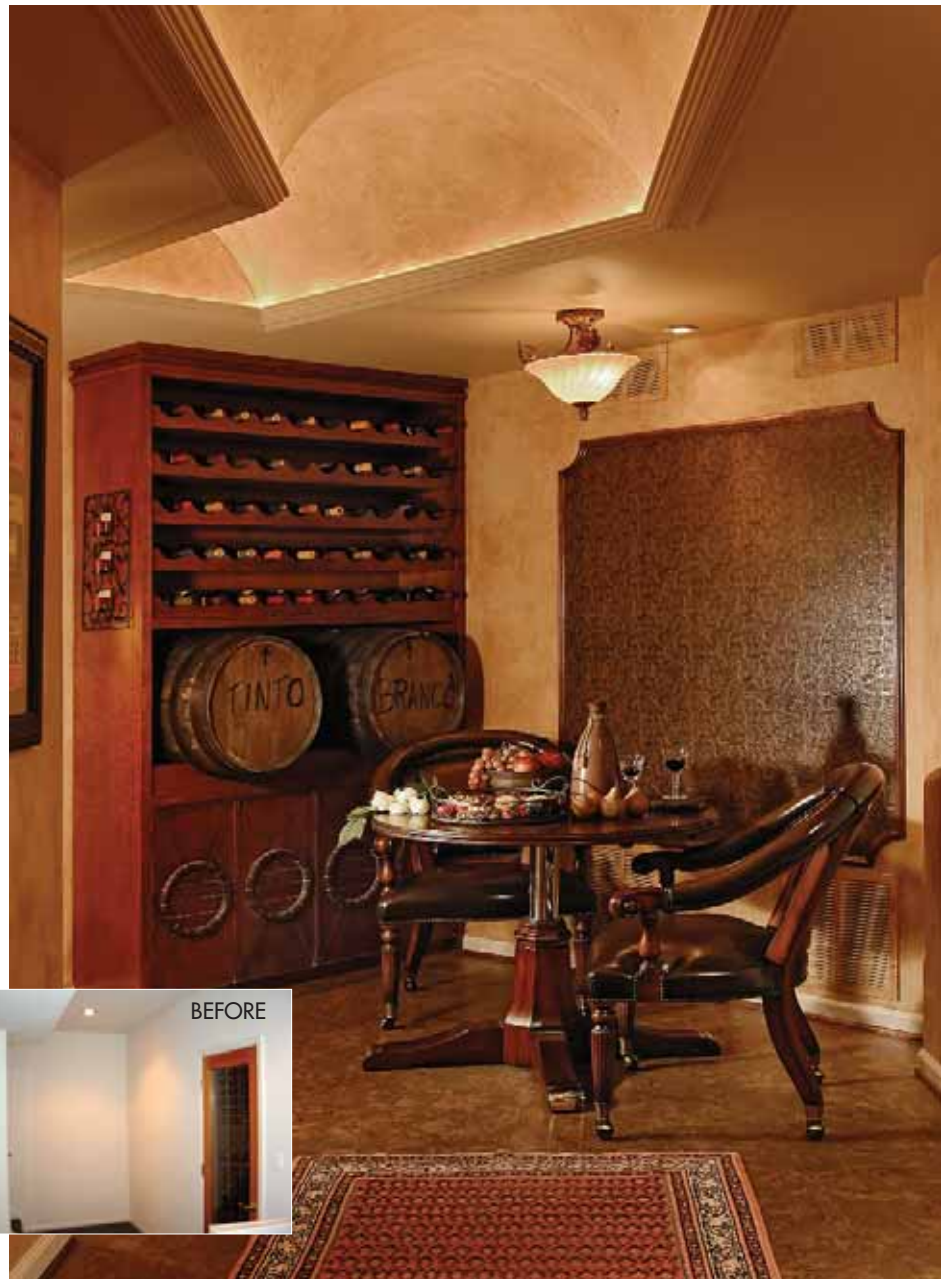
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*Interior Design:* Andre Sabbagh, TAS Interiors, Falls Church, Virginia

*Home Theater Installation:* Graffiti Audio Video, Washington, DC

*Decorative Painting:* Christine N. Barnette, Christine Nicole Productions, Glen Burnie, Maryland

*Cabinetry:* Shlomo Assaraf, As It Should Be, Kensington, Maryland



Interior designer Andre Sabbagh (top) gave his clients' typical suburban basement (inset) a dramatic makeover. Above the hallway leading into the space, he created a new cove ceiling covered in Venetian plaster (left). Custom cabinetry integrates old wine barrels made by his client's father (above).

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The wife, whose father and grandfather were both winemakers, asked Sabbagh to integrate two large wine barrels made by her father into the design. So he designed custom cabinetry that encompasses the barrels as well as additional wine storage. Then he created a cozy seating area in front of the cabinetry where the homeowners and their guests can enjoy a bottle of wine or play a game of cards.

Throughout the new space, Sabbagh incorporated rich, textural materials, such as custom wall panels made of tooled leather and cork floors that evoke the interior of an old wine cellar. Decorative painting by Christine N. Barnette creates an antique, rustic effect.

In the billiard room, Sabbagh designed  
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ly look like. Sabbagh had some exciting ideas. So exciting, in fact, that the homeowners decided to embark on a full-scale renovation that would create a one-of-a-kind billiard room, wine cellar and plush new home theater.

In the original space, stairs led down to the basement and into a stark hallway with an existing wine room on the left and a spare room on the right. The hall culminated at a bar overlooking the billiard

room. The décor consisted of white walls and dull wall-to-wall carpeting.

Sabbagh's goal was to create a refined, personalized space that would reflect his clients' style. "This is a home, not a pub," he explains. "We wanted to make it elegant. The intention was to give it the coziness of an Old World feel combined with the quality of today's finishes."

The broken light above the pool table (left, inset) was the starting point of the renovation. The new space boasts a freestanding bar above a wine-barrel mural (top); wall panels made of tooled leather (left); and new shelving over the existing bar, where the client displays 100-year-old miniature wine barrels made by her grandfather in Portugal (below).



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a freestanding bar along one wall. Below it, a mural of wine barrels by Barnette reinforces the theme. During a game of pool, guests can rest drinks and snacks on

the bars or on the two round granite stands hung on cast-iron bases that Sabbagh designed in opposite corners of the room.

Other than a custom-designed mirror, Sabbagh resisted the urge to hang other objects on the billiard room walls. “I wanted to make the space itself a focal point and the architectural element, of course, is the pool table. Each print, painting or mirror would overtake this dominant element in the room,” he explains.

One of the designer’s greatest challenges was configuring the home theater, a small space with three different entrances. To conserve space, he selected theater seating by Motion Craft

Furniture that reclines in place. Top-grain leather upholstery and dramatic lighting effects create a luxurious cinema experience. Meanwhile, the home the-

ater system installed by Graffiti Audio Video features all of the latest bells and whistles: a remote that controls all A/V equipment, the lighting and the retractable screen; surround-sound; and a platform motion shaker that kicks in during action scenes.

The homeowners are delighted with their home’s new lower level. Says Sabbagh, “The elements pull from the past and present. The beauty of the space is that it’s so personal. When friends or family come over, they have a story to tell.” ❖

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*Photographer Bob Narod is based in Sterling, Virginia.*

In the new home theater (left), top-grain leather upholstery with antique nail-head trim sets an elegant tone. The Motion Craft seats recline in place—a perfect solution for smaller rooms. Custom shelving (below) provides storage behind the retractable screen.

